A Crowded Week of Paintings and Prints

Interesting Works From Native and Foreign Sources

By Royal Cortissoz

A traveller recently returned from abroad gives us some striking notes on the state of the European print market. Old and modern etchings and engravings have soared in price. The dealers in London and Paris are reaping a golden harvest. Their patrons are numerous and apparently supplied with bottomless purses. Some of these new purchasers are British and French, but the leading figures in the field are men from Holland, Scandinavia and Japan. They have made loads of money and they are investing quantities of it in works of art. The Japanese especially are described as extraordinarily lavish. In Germany the situation is peculiar. There are prints in that country, good ones, but the dealers are inclined to hang onto them. The value of the mark has gone down too far. Possessors of precious artistic property who can contrive to let it lie idle prefer to wait for the day of a more stable currency. At present they can only sell at something like a suicidal sacrifice. Meanwhile, our own market booms and the American artist rides on the crest of the wave. We may cite the single case of those etchings of wild ducks by Mr. Frank W. Benson, to which extended reference was made in these columns when they were exhibited again, with some new plates, at the Kennedy Gallery this winter. In the month of December alone prints of his to the value of $25,000 were sold.

The Status of Renoir and Monet

The latest sensation in the matter of prices for works of art is provided by the latest record of the French Impressionists in the auction room. Renoir's recent death accounts to some extent, of course, for the prices paid for his works at the sale held by the American Art Association at the Plaza on Wednesday night. One of his pictures, "Dans la Prairie," fetched $28,000. Another, the beautiful "Canotiers á Chaton," was sold for $27,000. Decidedly his status in the market has gone up. Monet's remains about where it was, if one may judge from the fortune of the individual picture, though in round figures he would seem to have made a great advance. His works have for years fared well at auction. In January, 1917, at the dispersal of the James F. Sutton collection, his fine examples roused eager competition. Two of them, the "Vue de Bordighera," at $15,900, and the "Seine á Besancourt en Hiver," at $15,000, led a procession in which there was one item of $10,500, another of $9,000 and so on through an impressive list. The twenty-four pictures brought altogether about $122,000. In Wednesday night's sale the highest price paid for a Monet was $14,100, given by the Knoedlers for one of the Thames studies, but his average was strongly sustained and the twenty-seven examples brought a total of over $200,000.

How times have changed in a quarter of a century! A tremendous lot of water has gone under the bridge since Durand-Ruel made his famous exhibition in the Venetian palace of the Acamedy of Design on Twenty-third Street and half the visitors who saw it came away merely bewildered by the impressionistic hypothesis. Monet is a classic now and American collectors are ten times wiser and more numerous than they were then. The moral is that a master cannot fail because he is temporarily misunderstood. On the other hand, nothing could be more specious than the inference which we can imagine a cubist drawing from this affairs, the inference that cubism may triumph as impressionism has triumphed. The error of one generation does not necessarily falsify every adverse judgement pronounced by another. With such logic it would be about as reasonable to argue that because it was wrong to burn Joan of Arc it was not right to deport Emma Goldman.

American Artists, Grouped and Alone

The group exhibition, now become an annual feature at the Macbeth Gallery, is this year worthy of its predecessors. Thirty paintings by thirty Americans are hung. They are friendly, delightful pictures, wisely chosen for their intrinsic merits, though a certain thoughtful hospitality to different current tendencies is shown in the selection. A conspicuous place is given to a commanding exemplar of pure beauty, Mr. T. W. Dewing, whose "Lady in Pink" has a dual interest. This harmony in rose and ivory is one of his characteristic studies of the figure, filled with his usual exquisite charm. Furthermore, it is painted on a canvas of unwontedly small scale, productive of a new and beautiful effect. At the other end of the exhibition's comprehensive range we find in Mr. Robert Henri's "Little Girl in Red" a technical essay based upon dexterity alone. There is, if anything, a shade too much of sheer cleverness in the show. The figure work of men like Richard E. Miller and F. C. Frieseke is prodigiously facile and amusing, but somehow terribly superficial. Mr. Henri has at least a certain weight in his work. But the balance is well redressed. "The Bath," by Mr. C. W. Hawthorne, is a fine illustration of his faculty for combining the veracity of a portrait with the broader interest of a picture and his gift for adding a touch of sentiment which is not too sweet. The profile in this canvas is praticularly attractive, as fine a bit of drawing as he has ever put to his credit.

The landscapes are capital. There are romantic studies among them, notably the "Summer Pleasures," by Mr. F. B. Williams, in which he attempts the rôle of a modernized Lancret, and the "Dance of the Wind," by Mr. Elliott Daingerfield, which only needs a mellower tone to make a good souvenir of Ryder's tradition. But the open air work generally is of the simpler, more realistic order in which the American landscape painter is so sensitively proficient. A painting like Mr. Metcalf's "Wayside Cottage" makes one rejoice at having been born in the United States. The homely sweetness of the country road, the web of trees and leafage, the plodding horse, the silvery light permeating the whole scene, all are interpreted in a composition packed with every-day truth and with a thousand memories. There is a quantity of this racy work on the walls, landscapes by Charles H. Davis, J. Francis Murphy, Gardner Symons and others. It counts heavily in the very backbone of the show.

Eary and late periods of work are represented in the collection which Mr. Gari Melchers shows at the Montross Gallery. In both he exercises the steady, well-disciplined talent which by itself is half the balance. He handles form and color with knowledge. One relies upon his technique. There is no fumbling. There are no uncertain passages. The figure is always adequately drawn, the brushwork is direct and spirited. Over all there is flung the atmosphere of an individualized craftsman. The old pictures, the portraits of Dutch peasants in picturesque costume, like the "Mother and Child" or the "Girl with Hat," have acquired a handsome patina through which the rich, solid color makes an admirable effect. Mr. Melchers has what we might call a full-bodied style. His tone is robust. But in some of his canvases it is very skilfully refined. In the "Portrait of My Mother" his feeling for the subject would seem to have communicated an unusual suavity to his brush. The fine blacks are most delicately modulated. Amongst the more recent paintings there are a number of Southern studies, open air subjects such as the "Cedar Run," the "Early Spring," the "House with a Porch" and the "Happy Creek," in which the artist's familiar gift for glowing color is markedly enriched by qualities of light and air over which he had not always so sure a control. They show his art has not stood still, that it possesses a new and vitalizing luminosity.

An American artist whose work is too seldom recalled upon the scene, the late Frederic Remington, is brought back to us at the new Levy Gallery. Six of his pictures are there, passages from that life upon the Western plains for which he had an unquenchable enthusiasm. Remington had just the vivacity needed for the sympathetic interpretation of cowboys and the like. The blinding light of the prairie affected his palette. These impressions of his are sometimes a bit garish. But there returns here, to remind us of a memorable period in his career, one of those night studies in which he struck a new trail. "The Call for Help" this one is called, a picture of horses assailed in their corral by wolves. The light gleaming from the cabin window near at hand brings a human element into the little drama. For it is a drama that Remington paints, after his habit of reviving not only the superficial picturesqueness, but the very essence of the frontier. The picture makes a moving appeal and it is, into the bargain, a brilliant piece of painting. There is another canvas in a kindred quiet key, "The Herd Boy." The rest are all in the tawny scheme of color he affected. It is good to see his work again. Its originality and its sincerity have made it genuinely durable.

At the Reinhardt Gallery there are thirty-one paintings by Mr. Harry B. Lashman, paintings of "Les Veielles Pierres de France," as the catalogue designates them. The general title is aptly chosen. He has traversed not only well-worn paths in Paris and on the Riviera, but has sought out the old stones of France in obscure villages and amongst some of the most picturesque châteaux of the countryside. His method is not wholly ingratiating. The draughtsmanship in many of the essentially architectural subjects is a trifle hard. He states all the facts where one would like him to be a little more freely suggestive. A broader play of light and shade, softening his linear passages, would be a welcome improvement. But even in the absence of this we enjoy his towers and turrets, his tiled roofs and capricious skylines, his old bridges and his altogether romantic properties. There is no hint of the war in his panorama. He places before us ancient, untroubled France, the France which composes itself into enchanting pictures. He makes a good spokesman for its charm.

Also at the Reinhardt Gallery there are a number of drypoints by Mr. Nicholas P. Zarokilli, who, in a parenthesis, is made known to us as "Nikolaki." He is a virtuoso in portraiture, a virtuoso of the type of Helleu. There are, indeed, amongst his studies of feminine personalities, some plates which the celebrated French artist could not afford to disdain. Mr. Zarokilli has the light elegance of his prototype, knows what to omit, knows how to make a single line tell and altogether weaves astonishingly graceful and decorative patterns. He has a wider scope than we associate with the name of Helleu. Beside the fashionable frou frou of his portraits of women he shows many portraits of men, simpler in style, and, on the whole, bolder, weightier in construction.

Lester Hornby and Auguste Lepere

The impressions of the American front in France which Mr. Lester G. Hornby shows at the Kennedy Gallery belong amongst the better works of art which have been produced by the war. This, paradoxically, in spite of the fact that they are not by any means impeccable etchings. We do not know if he took his plates to the front or based them on sketches brought back to the studio. In any case they reveal an often uncertain touch with the needle. Especially in the architecture which enters into many of his compositions, Mr. Hornby's draughtsmanship is strangely vacillating, at times almost feeble. He hasn't an atom of the fluent precision which you get in the etchings of Cameron, for example, or of Muirhead Bone. On the other hand, having accepted his limitations, you apprehend with something like zest the movement, the reality which he manages to express. His line, as etched line, may lack distinction. His picture of life at the front is veracious. More than that, Mr. Hornby's work is fresh and personal. He is interesting where some technicians of greater resources have been commonplace.

There has been arranged at the Keppel Gallery an exhibition in memory of Auguste Lepere, who died in November, 1918, one of the most engaging figures in the whole history of the graphic arts in France. His original and charming work as a wood engraver is represented; there is one of his lithographs shown, but the show at large—running to threescore plates and more—is dedicated to his genius as an etcher. He had genius. There is superb craftsmanship in what he did, but, in addition to that, there is the quality which only a man of imagination, of true inspiration, brings to his task. In any French artist of the higher grade there is the hint of the classicist, the echo of tradition. In some of Lepere's landscapes he seems the inheritor of Claude and Poussin, the builder of sylvan compositions breathing half of nature and half of an antique vision. On other occasions he recalls the feathery charm of Fragonard, the Frago of certain Italian villa scenes. More often he is saturated in the very dews of his native land, French to the core of him, French with a sweetness more precious even than his masterly technique. Lepere was as varied as he was prolific. This exhibition illustrates many phases of his art. They are all beautiful. That was his great achievement, beauty founded on truth and faintly poetized by his fine temperament.

It is exciting to learn that the Lepere prints are to be followed in the near future at the Keppel Gallery by an exhibition of the etchings of Besnard. He is perhaps the most brilliant of contemporary French artists and his plates need to be made better known in this country.

ROSAMOND PINCHOT
(From the portrait by Mrs. Mary Young-Hunter at the Ehrich Gallery)

PEACOCK FEATHER
(From the painting by J. Alden Weir at the Macbeth Gallery)

Random Impressions In Current Exhibitions

In one of the upper rooms at the Knoedler Gallery there is an entertaining exhibition of originals drawn for "Harper's Bazar," by Drian, a draftsman in black and white, and Romain de Tirtoff, the Parisianized Russian, who is better known by his pen name of "Erté." They are very clever and gay, between them. Drian is the bolder and broader of the two, a little closer to reality. His blacks are deftly distributed. "In My Studio" is a stunning drawing. "Erté" is one more man of fantasy, a designer akin to Aubrey Beardsley. He works in color, and though his drawings are sometimes a little sugary they are, on the whole, very sprightly and decorative—the sort of drawings to make a magazine cover amusingly clamorous. His style is highly polished. It is so with all these fantastical draftsmen nowadays. The observer who wants a moment's repose after witnessing such artistic pyrotechnics may find it in another little show at the Knoedler Gallery—one of portraits by Robert Nanteuil, that classic of old French engraving.

Painters of the portraits of children seldom are so successful in blending the charm of their subject with technical ability as is Mrs. Mary Young-Hunter, the English artist now making an exhibition at the Ehrich Gallery. Portraits in this category are often merely pretty. These are of more serious interest. The full length of one of Mrs. Hooker's children, the "Blanchette," is both a winning image of girlhood and a first rate bit of craftsmanship. Some of the portraits here are more studied than others, and not altogether to their advantage. Mrs. Young-Hunter is at her best when she uses an almost careless freedom, seizes a momentary impression and flings it on the canvas with easy, spontaneous brushwork. The "Rosamond Pinchot," for example, is in the vein which is most favorable to the revelation of her talent. Her workmanlike canvases should make her a popular visitor.

There is a striking group of large pastel portraits now to be seen at the Anderson Galleries. They were produced by Mr. Walter Beck, an Ohioan, whose studies abroad were influenced by the masterpieces of Hals, Rubens and Van Dyck. He has won some repute as a painter of religious subjects, but the present display is confined to the portraits of a number of veterans of the Civil War. They are a little too emphatic in color and disclose an aggressive, vigorous quality a little at odds with the genius of the fragile medium employed. Yet their vitality is beyond question. The renowned Colonel Mosby is the leading hero portrayed, but there are numerous other fighters of the period who are hardly less interesting as Mr. Beck presents them. He has put his forceful adroitness at the service of an enkindling patriotic motive.

Two more collections were placed on view at the American Art Galleries yesterday. One, formed chiefly of the modern paintings assembled by Mrs. Roland C. Lincoln, will be sold at the Plaza on the evening of January 22. It contains two examples of Millet, several other Barbizon paintings and a number of American works, pictures by La Farge, Vedder, Winslow Homer and others. The second collection, to be sold at the American Art Galleries on the afternoons of January 22, 23 and 24, is of early American and English furniture, glass, china and other antiques belonging to Mrs. Eben Sutton.

The new "one man" exhibitions to be announced include a collection of paintings by Mr. Bernhard Gutmann at the Folsom Gallery and a number of recent pictures at the Babcock Gallery by Mr. S. Witkewitz. The Ralston Gallery brings forward to-morrow landscapes by Mr. Frank De Haven and recent portraits by Mr. Arthur De Ferraris. The current show at the Milch Gallery is devoted to works by members of the Taos Society of Artists.

The date for the entrance of exhibits in the annual display of the Society of Independent Artists has been postponed. Originally it was fixed for the middle of January. Intending exhibitors now have until February 1 to make their arrangements.

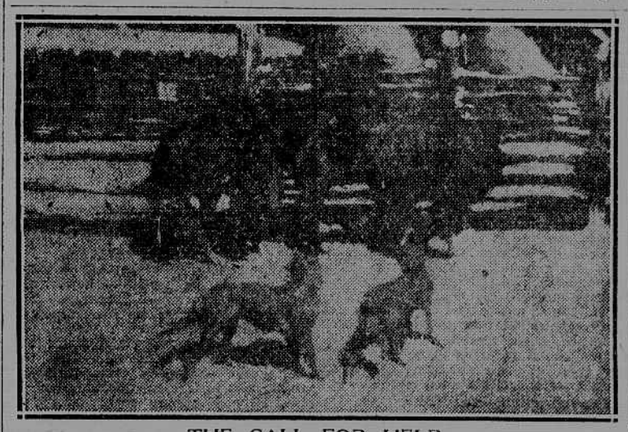
The collection of drawings formed by Mr. V. Winthrop Newman is presently to be sold at the Anderson Galleries. Works of the American, British, Dutch, Flemish, French, German and Spanish schools will be placed on view on January 24 and will be sold on the evenings of February 2 and 3. The drawings of Italian origin will come later.

On Wednesday, January 21, there will be opened at the Brooklyn Museum a memorial exhibition of works of sculpture by the late Helen Farnsworth Mears. It will comprise fifty or sixty pieces in bronze and plaster. The show lasts until the middle of next month.

Mlle. Germaine Tailleur, French colorist, has opened an exhibition of "Scenes of the American Victories" at the Arlington Galleries, under the auspices of French officials and a committee which includes in its membership Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, McDougall Hawkes and Ernest Peixotto.

Mlle. Tailleur is one of the unofficial envoys who have come to America to cement the bonds of friendship between France and America. She intends to found a water color school in New York. Resides the "Victory" paintings, which include landscapes of Château Thierry and Belleau Wood, Mlle. Tailleur is showing a number of her flower paintings. She was decorated with the Reconnoissance Française medal for valorous service during the war. She has an excellent technique, painting in thick splashes of color which tend to assure the life of her pictures against the action of the sun and light.

Modern art as represented by the Kit Kat Club has been on view at "The Lantern," one of the informal resorts of Greenwich Village. The subjects treated by members of the club afford variety in theme and treatment. There is, for instance, Hans Nagel's "Old Man With Fez," which may be profitably contrasted with E. T. Busenbank's "La Toilette Orientale" and Warren Keith's "Hill Pasture." Of course, the Village has provided at least one subject in Mr. Keith's "Chimney Pots of Greenwich Village."



THE CALL FOR HELP
(From the painting by Frederic Remington at the Levy Gallery)